

**MINUTES
CITY OF WOODSTOCK
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
July 1, 2021
Council Chambers**

A Regular Meeting of the City of Woodstock Economic Development Commission was called to order by Chairman Rick Francois at 8:00 AM on Thursday, July 1, 2021.

ROLL CALL

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT: J. Buckley, Chris McGowan, Henry Patel and Chairman Rick Francois.

COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT: W. Read.

STAFF PRESENT REMOTELY: Economic Development Director Garrett Anderson and Executive Assistant / Chief Deputy City Clerk Jane Howie.

OTHERS PRESENT REMOTELY: none.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES:

Motion was made J. Buckley, second by C. McGowan, to accept the Minutes from the May 6, 2021 meeting. Ayes: J. Buckley C. McGowan, H. Patel and Chair R. Francois. Nays: none. Absentees: W. Read. Abstentions: none. Motion carried; Minutes were accepted.

PUBLIC COMMENT: none.

COMMISSION COMMENTS / UPDATES: none.

GENERAL BUSINESS/DISCUSSION:

1. Revolving Loan Report

G. Anderson said at the March 2020 Emergency Meeting, City Council put payments & interest on hold due to the pandemic. Then in June 2020, this was extended until Woodstock reached Phase 5, which was just recently reinstated with a first payment due on August 1, 2021. However, My Little Bow Peeps Shop loan was started in June 2020, so they have been making payments all along. G. Anderson continued on to say that \$277,000 is currently loaned out of the \$300,000 in available funds. When the City created the emergency loans program in March of 2020, just as the COVID-19 business closings were occurring, there was a \$5,000 per business loan available; these loans were converted to grants.

G. Anderson said the most recent action in this area is Project Knight, which is a project on Benton Street. With a total project cost estimated at \$200,000, much is being done by the local businesses impacted. The City has offered loans to Benton Street businesses to complete this project. The Council has approved \$80,000-\$100,000 in loans for those four businesses.

R. Francois asked if other businesses in town wanted a \$25,000 loan from the City, would the City consider this. G. Anderson said that is very possible.

2. Project Activity Report – July 2021

G. Anderson said things are definitely picking up. Mixin Mingle has expanded into the neighboring location. G. Anderson said E. W. Training moved to another location in Woodstock. The Woodstock Square Apartments opened with 28 units leased; the other two units leased quickly after that. R. Francois asked where tenants were relocating from. G. Anderson said many of them came from outside of Woodstock with a wide range of ages.

G. Anderson added that the old hospital on South Street has been demolished and the site has been restored to grass. G. Anderson shared information about other projects in progress, including Jersey Mike's, which is moving in at the corner of Rte. 47 and Country Club Road. He said Cedarhurst is coming along, Assisted Living and Memory Care. The operator is based out of St. Louis, MO. City Council will consider an incentive agreement for the new building at 131 Washington St. R. Francois asked what would happen if that building remained in disrepair for a long time. G. Anderson said the City's Code Enforcement Officer would oversee the site. G. Anderson said the existing building footprint will be an office, currently intended for Frisbie & Lohmeyer. The developer intends to construct a new commercial storefront immediately south of the former gas station, but tenants have not yet been determined. This may include residential upstairs, but this will depend on the results of environmental testing.

G. Anderson mentioned several other projects that are in process. He said the former BMO Harris Bank is coming along, tenants haven't been announced yet, but is proposed to include four restaurants. The lower level off Jefferson Street will have a pizza place and a speakeasy. There will also be live entertainment, an upscale restaurant, and a restaurant with dueling-pianos; there is one operator for all the restaurants. In addition, there will be four office suites above.

G. Anderson stated that Aldi is expected to break ground next week at their new location off Lake Avenue. MAC Automation will be adding 30,000 sf at a project cost of \$3.6 million with incentives from the City. As it pertains to the train station, the City is still waiting for the butcher to move in. The City has received new requests for space in the Old Courthouse. A meeting has been scheduled for mid-July to discuss the potential, make decisions and move forward with the funding.

G. Anderson said the Brink Street Properties wish to construct seven duplexes in the Brink Street & Brown Street neighborhood. They are looking for TIF incentives for

environmental purposes, as that site used to be an automobile junkyard. This project has been approved by the Plan Commission and will be presented to City Council on July 20. In response to a question from J. Buckley, G. Anderson said the City is working with the landlord to fill the space.

G. Anderson reported that the Food Shed Co-op reached 1,000 members. They plan to start aggressive fundraising once they have 1,200 members. Project Frankfort, which is a new national chain hotel, is looking at the site in front of the Towels & More location, near Culver's. The developer has proposed an 80+ room hotel, two restaurants along with approximately 120 units in two residential apartment buildings. This is included in the enterprise zone and TIF #2.

G. Anderson mentioned that Congresswoman Underwood has requested \$4.0 million from the federal Infrastructure Bill for the Metra railyard relocation to Woodstock. R. Francois added that Metra's ridership is still way down due to the pandemic. G. Anderson said Metra is hopeful that things will turn around this fall when school resumes.

There was a brief discussion about the potential for, and location of, a cannabis growing facility in the City. A few locations have sought preliminary zoning approval, but none of them have received State licensing yet.

R. Francois asked about where the City stands with gas stations and approving new ones. G. Anderson said the City doesn't have a policy; however, it is believed that Mayor Turner may support the sale of alcoholic beverages in gas stations, which could bring more interest. He mentioned that the BP gas station is interested in expanding and adding the sale of alcohol. G. Anderson explained the parameters and definition of a truck stop.

In response to a question from R. Francois pertaining to sales tax updates, G. Anderson said this is holding up very well. There have been some state changes, online retailer's sales tax, such as Amazon, are now paying sales tax, which started in January 2021. G. Anderson said most of Woodstock's retailers are doing OK; however, some restaurants are still a little bit slow. J. Buckley asked about Bull Valley Ford and Kunes. G. Anderson said both auto dealerships are doing very well.

In response to a question from R. Francois about Route 47 updates, G. Anderson said IDOT is supposed to be sending letters about right-of-way acquisitions this fall. IDOT does have funding set aside for both ROW acquisitions and the construction, which has been confirmed by the City's Lobbyist. G. Anderson shared further information about IDOT and Route 47 project plans.

R. Francois asked to see the sales tax reports. G. Anderson will provide these for the next commission meeting. G. Anderson explained how the sales tax reports are compiled. There was a bit of discussion about the Horizon Center, and the hopes of getting the parking lot repaired and updating the site. G. Anderson said someone is interested in the

former Wisted's property, which would be a national chain retail store. Or, this party would be interested in building behind the BP gas station.

ADJOURN:

Motion by J. Buckley, second by C. McGowan, to adjourn this meeting. Ayes: J. Buckley, C. McGowan, H. Patel and Chair R. Francois. Nays: none. Absentees: W. Read. Abstentions: none. Motion carried. Regular Meeting adjourned at 9:20 AM. The next regular meeting is scheduled for Thursday, August 5, 2021 at 8:00 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jane Howie
Chief Deputy City Clerk